THE

MEDICAL MISSIONARY SOCIETY

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The great object of this Society, is to aid the Missionary of the Gospel, and the philanthropist, in the execution of their good works, by opening avenues for the introduction of those sciences and that religion, to which we owe our own greatness, by which we are enabled to act a useful part in this life, and which fit us for the enjoyment of a better life hereafter; and to effect these purposes, it is necessary that a favourable impression with regard to ourselves be first made on the minds of the Chinese people. Much experience of the habits and manners of this peculiar people, from a long residence in China, has convinced me, that the practice of the healing art among them promises this desirable influence; and as the Chinese evince the greatest anxiety for the benefits which this science affords, I cannot help urging the consideration of the subject upon the missionary societies, and likewise upon the evangelical communities of both England

and America. It is true, that our Saviour's great and last mandate is "to preach the Gospel," still, on giving this command, he did not abrogate his former, "to heal the sick." I would therefore with all deference submit, that it is no deviation from his own plan, to render assistance in relieving those evils which flesh is heir to, especially if the attempts be made from a conviction, that such benevolent deeds cannot fail to be a means, which must ultimately tend to the propagation of the truths of *His* gospel. Nothing has been attempted in the medical line with the Chinese that has not met with success; the immediate effects have been good, and when moral and religious instruction shall be united with the healing art, who can say where the influence of such a union shall end? The minds of this people must be gradually prepared for the reception of religious and moral principles, and the surest way to accomplish this, will be by showing them the effects of these principles on our own conduct. They are not capable of understanding abstract truths, but facts and actions speak for themselves. The Chinese, from their manner of life, are the subjects of innumerable diseases, the sight of which is daily intruded upon those who visit the "celestial empire;" and the subsistence of their lower classes is derived altogether from manual labour, therefore the inability to perform that labour is the most serious evil that can befall them. The practice of medicine by the Chinese physicians, is blended with childish superstitions; and surgical aid cannot be procured even by the opulent,

for the practice of surgery in any useful form is unknown among them. The influence then of those who restore them to the exercise of their powers is easily accounted for; and it is evident that this is a sort of influence that is likely to be widely extended, and it will now be seen that the course proposed by the medical missionary society in China, *by its usefulness*, recommends itself immediately to their attention. There is no doubt that inquiries will be made by the Chinese as to the motives of such benevolent acts; when those who are engaged in this good cause will explain that the real concern is not for the body which perisheth, but for THAT which is immortal! It appears to me that the number of medical practitioners might be increased to almost any extent, and all find employment about Canton; but other parts of the empire, I foretell, will ere long be visited in the same way, and doubtless with the same success that has attended the efforts of those, who have practised around the walls of that city. "The harvest is plenteous, but the labourers are few." With regard to the qualifications of the medical gentlemen to be employed, the nature of the work requires, first, that they be thoroughly acquainted with their profession, and possess energy and activity; next, that they be religious; and lastly, that they be men who consider their own interest as entirely subordinate, when compared with that of the great cause in which they engage. I say religious, because, in the course of medical practice, opportunities will occur, when a man piously disposed might

inculcate religious precepts with great effect, although he may not unite in his own person, the two professions of divinity and medicine; a union which I think objectionable, as the all-absorbing duties of the active physician would leave him but a scanty portion of time to devote to any regular form of religious instruction: moreover the profession of medicine is *replete* with responsibility, and requires unremitting attention, and though individuals may be found who, like my friend Dr. Parker, are competent to the duties of both divinity and medicine, I do say from my knowledge of mankind, that such exceptions are rare.

"Rara avis in terris."

However, upon the Rev. Dr. Parker too much praise cannot be bestowed, for besides being a pious minister of the Gospel he is a very able physician, and does not run a risk of injuring the cause by pretending to a knowledge and skill in medicine which he does not possess; and my remarks, in objection to a union of the two professions, do not apply to men who, like him, are competent to perform the duties of both; but to *those missionaries of the Gospel* who, possessing an imperfect knowledge of the healing art, attempt to make it a means of introducing themselves to the confidence of the heathen, as by such men incalculable mischief may be done, both to their fellow-creatures and to the cause of religion itself. I am so thoroughly convinced that, by following up the plan laid down by the "Medical

Missionary Society in China," results will be produced far beyond any thing which has as yet appeared; that it will be one of those causes of which the effects will be felt even before we have time to trace its progress, that I ardently wish to see some pious, medical gentlemen go out and join Dr. Parker in the fulfilment of so praiseworthy an undertaking. The "Medical Missionary Society in China" will not appoint medical persons, but will rely on those missionary societies in England and America, which shall enter into *its* plans, to make the appointments; as it will *thus* render such missionary societies responsible for the selection of the individuals; and the "Medical Missionary Society in China" will in return be answerable to them, by receiving and pointing out the course to be pursued by those medical gentlemen who are sent out under their auspices. Besides, the "Medical Missionary Society in China" foresees that missionary societies will emulate each other in the choice of good and proper men, as on their selection ITS destinies are suspended. Should my observations turn the attention of the missionary societies and the evangelical communities of England and America towards forwarding the plan laid down by the "Medical Missionary Society in China," I trust that the day is fast approaching when the gospel of that glorious Being whose mercies are not confined to either quarter of the globe, will shine in full splendour over eastern lands.

I now beg to recommend to those benevolent and pious persons who possess sentiments in common with

the members of the "Medical Missionary Society in China," the perusal of Dr. Parker's reports, published quarterly in the Chinese Repository since February, 1836. The "Medical Missionary Society in China" has a house at Macao for the reception and care of such medical gentlemen, as may be sent out to its protection.

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Medical Missionary Society, China.

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